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THE SPIRIT OF THE HOUSE

ANNA COLEMAN LADD: SCULPTOR

BY ANNA SEATON-SCHMIDT

THE sculpture of Anna Coleman Ladd is a distinct contribution to American art; not only because it is excellent in workmanship and possesses the rare quality of imagination, but that her inspiration has come from the soil whereon she was born, notwithstanding the fact that she grew up and received her art education in Europe.

Her greatest ambition is to express the life and ideals of our Republic, and she longs to create an enthusiasm for sculpture by placing it where it may appeal directly to the people. "My dream is to work for all outdoors, to produce sculpture to be placed on street corners, on walls, on the open roads."

For centuries the best pictures and statues have been shut up in private collections or rarely visited museums.

We need great works of art in our

streets, in our woods and parks, where they may awaken a love of beauty in all who behold them.

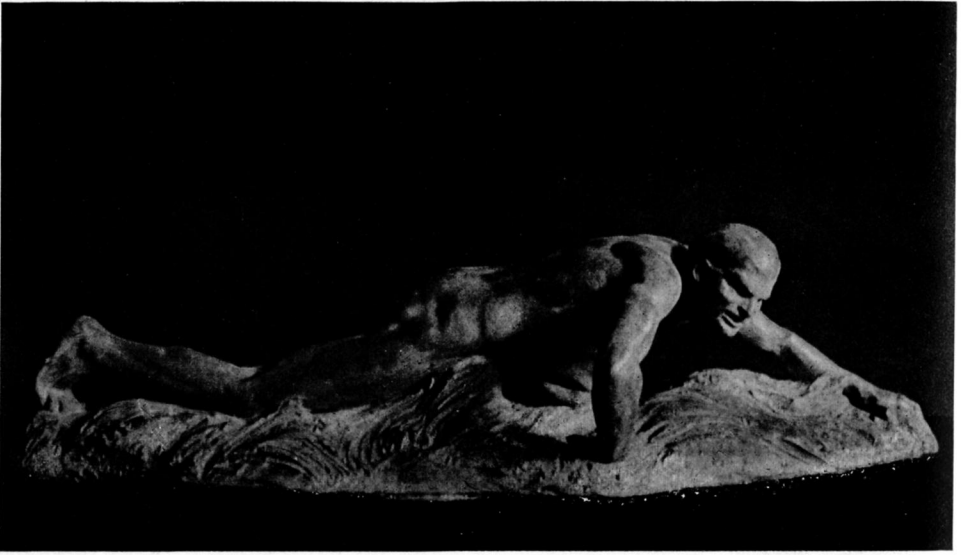
Athens wrote the history of her hopes and fears and aspirations in her public art, and her children grew up beneath the spell of that beauty and were inspired by it to noble deeds and civic patriotism.

If we hope to possess a truly national art, must we not make it, as did the Greeks, a living force in the lives of our people?

Nothing can contribute more to this end than noble architecture and uplifting outdoor sculpture.

That the genius of Mrs. Ladd seeks expression through works to be placed in "the open" renders it worthy of sincere consideration.

An ardent lover of nature, she strives



THE BEAST OF PREY

ANNA COLEMAN LADD

to reproduce the human form faithfully, realistically; yet her appeal is always made through the abstract and impersonal.

Take that statue which first attracted thoughtful artists—"The American." It is true that the masterful force of this figure was inspired by the American spirit, but while it represents our struggle with, and conquest of, a new world, it stands for the universal human qualities of strength, determination and moral force; just as her "Beast of Prey" portrays the low, earthside of Man; acquisitive, relentless, lithe and sinewy as a tiger—and as pitiless!

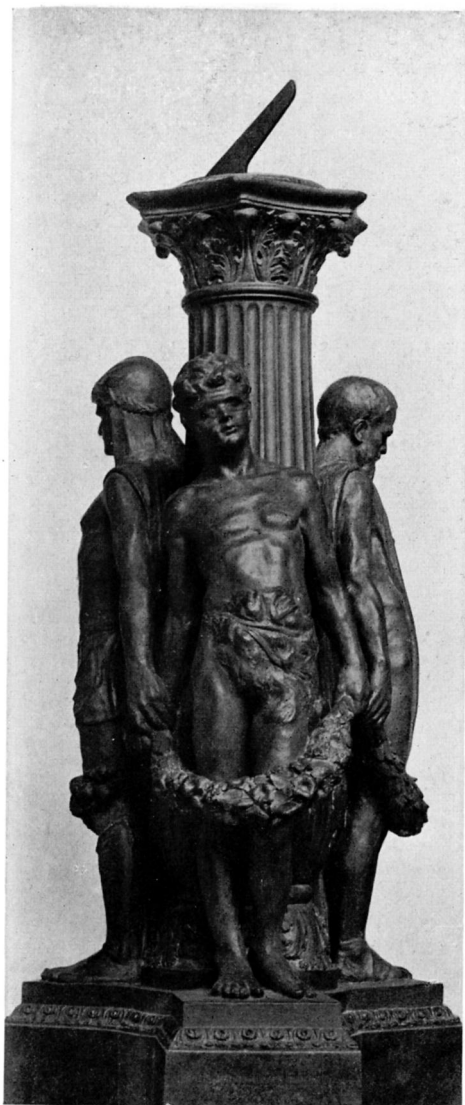
This powerfully modeled figure, creeping through the dank swamp grass, ready to spring on friend or foe, deserves to be placed among the great imaginative conceptions of modern art.

Technical problems are always of absorbing interest to the sculptor, peculiarly so to one whose poetic vision seizes the vital, dramatic side of life and strives to reveal it through the medium of marble or bronze. "For without perfect control of one's medium the most powerful emotions must fail to express themselves," says Rodin, that marvelous portrayer of human passions, and Mrs.

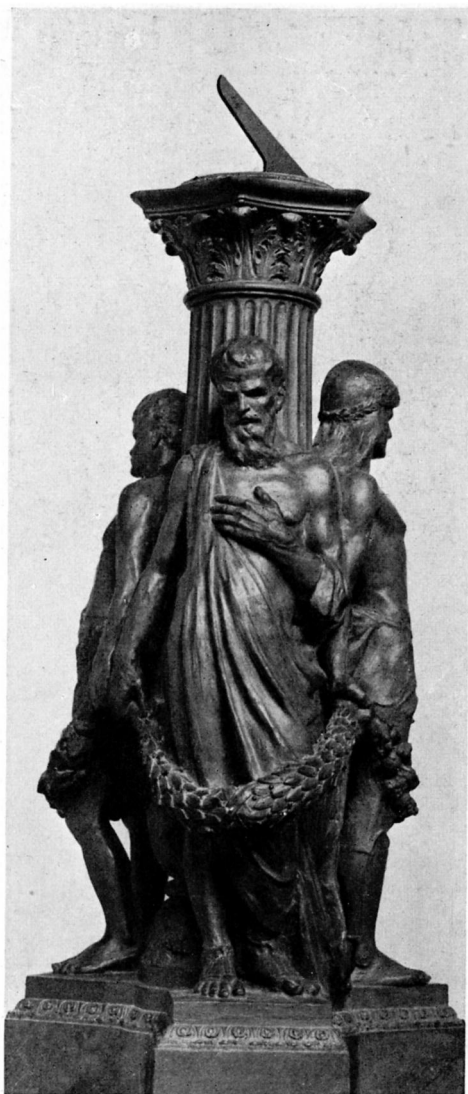
Ladd agrees with him that "No sudden inspiration can take the place of the long labor that is absolutely necessary before the eyes can gain a knowledge of forms and proportions and the hand a docile responsiveness to sentiment." For this reason she has continued her studies with Charles Grafty, that master of technicians.

But no amount of teaching can ever produce anything higher than works of imitative value. To awaken through one's work a love of nature, of beauty, the artist must first possess the capacity of being profoundly moved by it, must experience the emotion which he desires to communicate. This is the gift of genius which Mrs. Ladd possesses. Her figures on "The Sundial," reproduced on the next page, reflect the joy and enthusiasm with which she modeled them. Youth's eyes are veiled, his hands held by the past and future; wrapped in dreams he is oblivious of their fetters. He is the dawn, and morning glories and primroses fill his hands. Manhood has blazing suns on helmet and greaves; and ripe fruit in the garland he grasps. His eyes are open, facing facts.

As the first figure is the dreamer, the second the man of action, so the third is



YOUTH



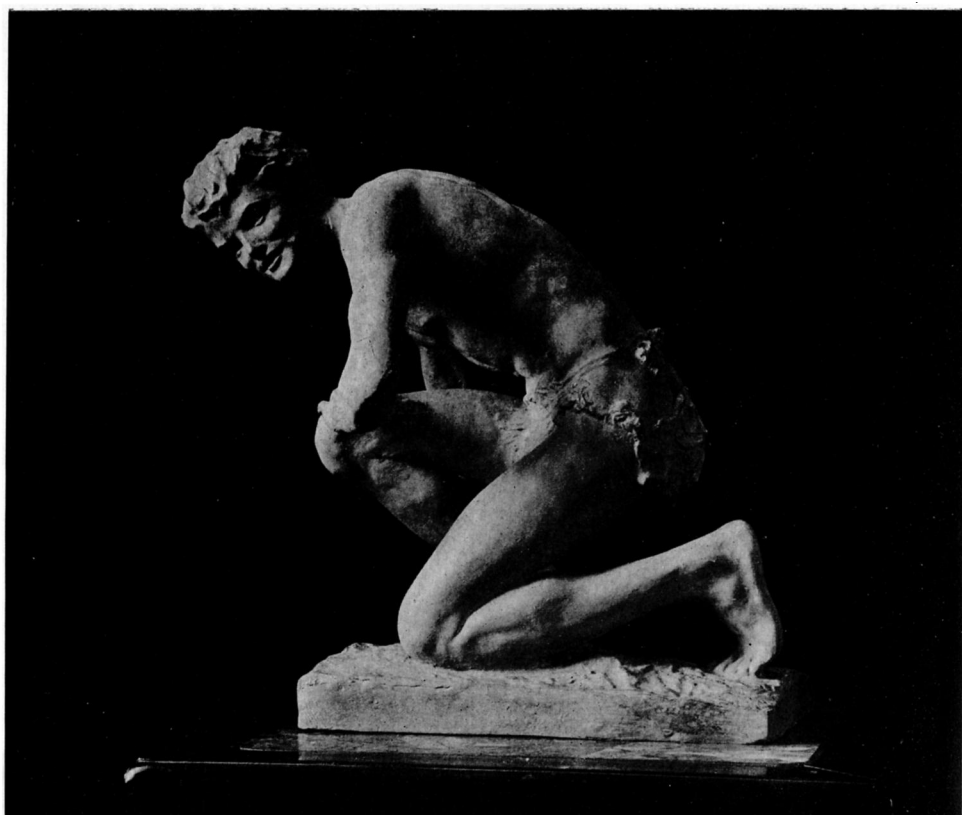
AGE

the thinker—one who has attained. He holds his laurels indifferently, lost in memories as his hand touches that of Youth.

The motto which encircles the dial is taken from a 12th Century Italian Troubadour poem:

“Bitter-sweet memories of days long gone,
Which when I most do grasp them, most elude
me.”

This Sundial stands in the Italian garden of Mrs. W. Scott Fitz, in Manchester-by-the-Sea, who has also bought the Bird Fountain, a more recent production, the winning charm of which lies in the figure of St. Francis with cowl pushed back, “rejoicing,” as the Fioretti expresses it, “in the beauty and variety of birds”; one of which he tenderly holds, while others crowd about him, or drink from the fountain’s edge.



YOUTH

ANNA COLEMAN LADD

Even more of the joyousness of her spirit is revealed in the "Young Pan"—a small bronze figure originally modeled for one of those wonderful forest-gardens that lead down to the sea on the Gloucester-Magnolia shore.

"'Pan' and 'Youth' are meant to be seen," says Mrs. Ladd, "crouching among the leaves, peering out like joyous wild things, animal-like, faun-like, youth-like, personifying the American 'Spirit of the Woods.'"

These slim young bodies, into which the sculptor seems to have breathed the very breath of life, are vibrant with youthful emotion. There is in them no hint of the sad tragedy of life expressed through every nerve and muscle of "The Slave," whose abandonment to despair is in striking contrast to the evident strength and vigor of his body—in spite

of which he is a Slave, bound hand and foot by the golden meshes of a woman's hair. That it is the glamour of passion which enslaves him is shown by the artist in carving but the mask of a woman that lies at his feet and entangles them in its swirls of hair.

His despair is born of the knowledge that his chains could be so easily broken were his moral strength but equal to his physical power; his realization of the impotency of his will and the degradation of his spiritual aspirations.

As a sculptor Mrs. Ladd was chiefly concerned here with the play of light which modeling produces on the ever-changing surfaces of the human body.

The proper disposition of light by means of the modeling is the great technical problem solved by the Greeks.

To make "the contour of the human

body round and smooth and glowing with * * * that glory of light on the summit of things and that mystery of light in the shadows," to be able to create the perfect envelope—"that outer and mysterious verge on which trembles the spirit of life"—one must perfectly comprehend the interior construction and the laws of rhythmic unity which govern every motion of the human body.

Without this anatomical knowledge it would have been impossible to harmonize so perfectly the architectural lines of "The Slave" with its spiritual concept.

Mrs. Ladd first exhibited in Boston, Philadelphia and New York in 1907. Since then her work has been included in every American Exhibit of Sculpture.

Notwithstanding her preference for imaginative subjects, she has modeled a number of most successful portrait busts and reliefs—among them one of Rabbi Fleischer of Boston.

This is a bas-relief, the background of which is symbolic of the character of this "fighter and dreamer," who stands with his hands clasped behind him, looking toward the horizon where rises the figure of the Sphinx, the "Unanswered Question" which he always faces. He gazes not so much at the Sphinx as at the East, whence comes Light.

Beneath are the Hebrew letters: "To God belong the Mysteries; to man the revealed things."

While this is a perfect portrait of Charles Fleischer, it also partakes of that universal quality shown in "The Spirit of the House." It is a head of heroic size, typifying the Guardian of the Home—the man who protects the honor of his household, who watches over all who enter beneath his portal. The reproduction on page 251 gives some conception of the broad, vigorous modeling, but nothing, unfortunately, of the brooding tenderness and sweetness of the face.

Because of Mrs. Ladd's enthusiasm for work, hard, grinding, patient toil, one can predict a steady advance in her art.

Possessed of boundless imagination her brain teems with visions which she longs to embody in stone and bronze.

Many good sculptors produce but one statue a year; they must search far and near for a "suitable" subject.

She can not model fast enough to liberate the children of her dreams, which pour like a torrent into the soft clay.

Her studio is filled with these "notes" for future statues. With the exception of Rodin, I have never known any one who created with such rapidity.

Time, the great searcher of Truth, can alone determine her place among American artists, but such stupendous creative power, once allied with noble craftsmanship and an intellectual perception of the needs of modern conditions, would promise much for the future.

Her work has not only originality, but strength and unusual significance. While it stirs the emotions it also provokes thought.



THE AMERICAN

ANNA COLEMAN LADD